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Introduction: Reconceptualising Substate Mobilisation

Eve Hepburn

Abstract

Throughout Europe, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) have moved from ‘niche’ actors in party systems to mainstream political players. No longer the ‘outsider’ in party politics, these parties have successfully entered government at the regional and state levels and many have been responsible for pushing the agenda for radical constitutional change. Yet the success of SNRPs in moving from ‘protest to power’ is not without its challenges. This contribution explores the importance of nationalist and regionalist party adaptation to the twin challenges of multi-level politics (i.e. operating at the regional, state and European levels), and a multi-dimensional policy space, whereby they must articulate policy proposals alongside their territorial demands. As a result of these challenges, there is a need to re-conceptualise what SNRPs are fighting for, and the compromises they are willing to accept to achieve success.

Keywords

Regionalism; nationalism; political parties; multi-level governance

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From Peripheral to Mainstream Politics

Stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) have become a permanent feature of the European political landscape.¹ Once considered to be ‘revolts against modernity’

¹ The prefix ‘stateless’ is used to characterise nationalist and regionalist parties that operate in nations or regions that do not enjoy full statehood (for a comprehensive account of ‘nations without states’ or ‘stateless nations’, please see Keating 1996 and Guibernau 1999). Stateless nationalist and regionalist parties furthermore operate at the *substate* level and seek to represent substate territorial interests, which

(Lipset, 1985) and ‘throwbacks to the past’ (Hobsbawm, 1990), these parties have established themselves as both reputable and influential political players in most West European democracies.² Whilst Rokkan and Urwin (1983) identified approximately 29 main ‘peripheral parties’ in the early 1980s, Lane, McKay and Newton (1991) put this number at 44 ‘ethnic parties’, whilst recent scholarship has estimated that there 93 such parties (Masseti, 2009a). Clearly, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties – to the dismay of theorists of the ‘end of territory’ (Badie, 1995) – are increasing in numbers. Furthermore, such parties have augmented their electoral and political success, most notably at the regional level following decentralising reforms (on the UK and Spanish cases, see: Jones and Scully, 2006; Lineira, 2008). In places such as the Basque Country, Bavaria, the Canary Islands, Catalonia, Eastern Germany, Flanders, Galicia, Lombardy, Québec, Sardinia, South Tyrol, Valle d’Aosta, Veneto and Wales, SNRPs have successfully gained control of substate regional governments, either through majority, minority or coalition governments. Moreover, in Italy, Belgium and Germany SNRPs have entered government coalitions at the state level, enabling them to exert a strong degree of influence on statewide political discourse, party competition and policy-making (Deschouwer, 2009; Hepburn and Zaslove, 2009).

Another indicator of the strength and durability of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties is that they have begun to achieve their central goals of self-determination for their respective territories. In Belgium, the *Volksunie*, *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW) and *Front Démocratique des Francophones* (FDF) successfully pushed for the federalisation of the state, in Spain the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV) and *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) were successful in obtaining more autonomous powers for the Basque Country and Catalonia, in France *Corsica Nazione* was instrumental in pushing for greater self-determination for the island in the Matignon constitutional

should be distinguished from nationalist parties that operate at the *state* level and seek to represent state interests, i.e. the British National Party or Swiss People’s Party.

² Nationalist and regionalist parties have established themselves as permanent political players in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom (see Massetti 2009b for a comprehensive list of relevant parties). They have also emerged in Finland (*Ålands Framtid*), the Netherlands (*Fryske Nasjonale Partij*), and Portugal (*Partido Democrático do Atlântico*) in Western Europe, and in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia in Central and Eastern Europe. Prominent nationalist and regionalist parties have not appeared, however, in Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, or Sweden, which do not have significant territorial cleavages.

process, and in Germany the Bavarian *Christlich-Soziale Union* (CSU) has been a vociferous advocate of a strongly decentralised state so that regional interests are protected. Although some parties may not yet have achieved their maximal goals for the territory, evidence indicates that they are well on their way. For instance, a number of nationalist and regionalist parties in government (at the time of writing) have outlined proposals for radical constitutional change, such as the Scottish National Party's commitment to holding an independence referendum in Scotland, the Basque Nationalist Party's (PNV) proposed Ibarretxe plan which would give the Basque Country a form of 'sovereignty-association' within Spain, and the *Lega Nord's* proposal to overhaul the Italian state on a more federal basis. SNRPs parties have clearly played a formidable role in the restructuring of states (De Winter, Lynch and Gómez-Reino, 2006).

The electoral and political success of SNRPs is a powerful indicator of the continuing relevance of territory in the politics of European states. Territory continues to provide a basis for political action, representation, policy-making and mobilisation (Keating, 1998: 3). Yet despite this, there remains a strong tendency in political science to overlook or dismiss territorial actors as an anachronism or oddity in the predominantly class-based arena of 'mainstream politics'. Due to the 'methodological nationalism' of mainstream political science, i.e. the assumption that the state is the main social and political form in the modern world (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), territorial actors have often been treated as aberrations or exceptions in party politics. The dominant paradigm in political science has been the modernist one, in which functional diffusion across nation-states should lead to the ironing-out of differences across territory (Lijphart 1977; Lipset 1985). SNRPs, with their insistence on territorial difference, have been characterised by some scholars as 'problems' for the modern state, whose main purpose is national integration (Esman 1977; Lipset 1985; Hobsbawm 1990).

These assumptions have resulted in a limited, and often biased, assessment of the activities, strategies concerns of these parties. For example, SNRPs are often treated as single-issue or 'niche' parties due to their emphasis on territorial, rather than mainstream ideological issues (Jensen and Spoon 2008). Yet this analysis is far from complete. Jensen and Spoon ignore the strong class-based position of parties such as the socialist *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG), the social-democratic Scottish National Party

(SNP), the Christian democratic *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), and the right-wing *Lega Nord* (LN). In many cases, the territorial goals of SNRPs are strongly informed by their socioeconomic programmes, which shape their vision of the kind of society that they would like to create for the territory. Moreover, the claim that SNRPs are ‘niche’ actors overlooks the growing number of cases that have made the transition from peripheral movements to established parties of government. For example, the Catalan CiU, Bavarian CSU, and the South Tyrol STV have been the governing parties in their regions for decades, implementing rafts of public policy on issues such as education, transport and economic development. A powerful explanation for this is that SNRPs have tapped into discord and discontent with distant forms of authority, demanding more local control over territorial resources and decision-making. It appears that such parties have been amongst the main beneficiaries – along with green and radical-right parties – of voter disaffection with mainstream party elites (De Winter et al, 2006: 14).

Many stateless nationalist and regionalist parties have moved from the periphery to mainstream politics in the last twenty years, entering government at the regional and state level, forcing other parties to respond to their demands, and implementing their policy proposals. Yet the success of SNRPs in moving from ‘protest to power’ (Elias and Tronconi, 2009) is not without its challenges. Whilst these parties were (perhaps) once able to focus on the single issue of self-determination, they have been forced to change their strategies, behaviour and in some cases, to compromise some of their principles in order to succeed in an era of electoral volatility, partisan de-alignment, the erosion of traditional cleavages and the emergence of systems of multi-level governance. Experience in government has created new challenges for these actors. In particular, they must strike a balance between establishing themselves as an effective and competent party of government, whilst at the same time maintaining their commitment to radically overhauling the state. Albertazzi and McDonnell (2005), for instance, found that the *Lega Nord* had to walk a tight-rope in the second Berlusconi government, of having one foot in and one foot out of government. SNRPs often seek independence for their territory, but at the same time they must demonstrate that they can effectively implement their policies in order to win the next election. There are important questions here about the extent to

which these parties need to moderate and compromise their goals in order to pass legislation and to remain in government, and what trade-offs this might involve.

In addition to this, the prospect of a stateless nationalist or regionalist party in power has engendered a radical shift in the political landscape of regions in order to 'manage' the territorial challenge (Keating, 1998). SNRPs now face the threat of newly strengthened regional branches of statewide parties, which now compete with them to represent territorial interests. As Budge and Farlie (1983) would argue, they no longer have 'ownership' over the issue of territory. As a result of these new political developments, SNRPs now find themselves operating in a multi-dimensional political context, in which they must forge coalitions and adopt clear social principles, whilst their very own territorial aims are constantly being altered and shaped by the forces of state structural change and European integration. These changes are profound, and require much greater scrutiny by party scholars.

There have been few analyses of how such parties compete on multiple levels and on multiple dimensions of party competition. The aim of this volume is to reflect on the evolution of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties from this particular perspective, and to examine their responses to major changes in the fabric of West European states. There are two main elements of this collection: (1) how SNRPs have responded to multi-level governance – including both devolution/federalisation and European integration; and (2) how they position themselves in a multi-dimensional policy space, whereby the left-right ideological dimension is only one factor among others. We seek to form answers to these questions by considering the experience of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties in Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Italy, and highlighting the importance of their adaptation to multilevel, multidimensional politics. Each of the contributors has specialised in one, but often several, of the SNRPs in Europe. Through our comparisons, we aim to broaden our understanding of the common challenges facing these parties resulting from spatial rescaling above and beneath the state, from the process of moving from protest to power, from party competition with newly strengthened regional branches of statewide parties, and from pressures to move beyond the centre-periphery cleavage to embrace other policy positions. By developing an analytical framework that accounts for these multiple themes and issues, we are better

placed to fully understand regional mobilisation in contemporary West European politics. But before doing so, first we need to clarify what we mean when we talk about these parties.

An Evolving Party Family

Stateless nationalist and regionalist parties have been subject to detailed academic scrutiny. A great deal of research has been done on the performance of these parties – their electoral fortunes, support base, organisation, leadership, and above all their self-determination goals (e.g. Newell, 1994; Lynch, 1996; Van Atta, 2003; De Winter, 1994; Aguilera de Prat, 2002). These analyses are important for focusing attention on the territorial dimension of electoral politics as well as beginning to theorise about different demands for self-government. Although analyses of SNRPs have been generally limited to individual case studies, there have been valiant attempts to offer more comparative and generalisable data on these parties (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; De Winter and Gómez-Reino, 2002; Tronconi, 2004; De Winter et al, 2006; Elias, 2008). These analyses, amongst others, tend to refer to SNRPs as belonging to a ‘party family’, alongside the traditional categories based on the left-right ideological cleavage (Von Beyme, 1985).

The notion of a regionalist party family was introduced by scholars in the 1980s, whereby parties were grouped together on the basis of their limited territorial appeal (Seiler, 1982; Urwin, 1983). However, a new understanding of the party family developed in the 1990s, which classified parties based on their territorial demands (De Winter, 1994; De Winter and Türsan, 1998). Many party scholars have accepted this classification and include nationalist and regionalist parties in their standard lists of party families (Hix and Lord, 1997; Marks, Wilson and Ray, 2002). However, regionalist inclusion into the ‘party family’ group has been questioned by Mair and Mudde, who argue that due to the diversity of ideological identities of regionalist parties, ‘the group might be more usefully disaggregated and dispersed among the other competing families’ (Mair and Mudde, 1998: 222). Unsurprisingly, there has been considerable opposition to disbanding this party family from regionalist party scholars. Gómez-Reino (2008: 9) for instance argues that it is a cohesive group, given that their ‘party politics is firmly anchored in the specificity of their territorial claims’. Moreover, stateless nationalist and

regionalist parties satisfy one of Mair and Mudde's two main criteria for constituting a party family: their shared origins on the side of one of the main political cleavages, in this case being on the 'periphery' side of the centre-periphery cleavage. Where they fail to meet Mair and Mudde's criteria is that they do not have ideological coherence. However, this 'sorting' condition is arguably only valid if the left-right dimension is the main cleavage upon which parties compete. In a number of constitutionally-contested regional political arenas, such as Sardinia, Quebec and Scotland, party representatives and party scholars have acknowledged that it is territory and not class that is the main cleavage in party politics (Tidore, 1992; Gagnon, 2004; Hepburn, 2006).

However, whilst there has been consensus amongst territorial politics scholars that these territorial actors constitute a party family, there has also been a great deal of terminological confusion about what to call them. Political actors advocating substate territorial demands have, for example, been described as ethnic parties (Horowitz, 1985; Lane et al, 1991), peripheral movements (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan and Urwin, 1982, 1983), nationalist (Coakley, 1992; Conversi, 1997; Aguilera de Prat, 2002) ethnonationalist (Connor, 1977), ethnoterritorial (Rudolph and Thompson, 1985), minority nationalist (Lynch, 1996; Elias, 2008), stateless nationalist (Keating, 1996; Guibernau, 1999), regional nationalist (Van Atta, 2003), autonomist (Seiler, 1982; De Winter et al, 2006), regionalist (Brancati, 2007; Jolly, 2007; Van Houten, 2007; Dandoy and Sandri, 2008; Hepburn, 2009a), or non-statewide parties (De Winter, 1994; Pallares, Montero and Llera, 1997). Often, scholars use these labels interchangeably in their writings (even within the same essay). Yet although the proliferation of work on substate territorial actors has helped push this field into the realm of mainstream political science, as De Winter, Lynch and Gómez-Reino (2006: 21) have despaired, the multiplicity of labels which have characterised these parties has also in many ways hindered the conceptual development of the field. For instance, the contestation over party names has meant that certain cases have not looked at together, such as 'regionalist' parties in Bavaria and East Germany (see Hepburn, 2008; Hough, 2006; Hough and Koß, 2009) and 'nationalist' parties in Scotland, the Basque Country and Quebec (Newell, 1994; Keating, 1996; Conversi, 1996; Guibernau, 1999).

In order to combat this terminological confusion, De Winter and his colleagues (De Winter, 1994; De Winter and Türsan, 1998; De Winter and Gómez-Reino, 2002; De Winter, Gómez-Reino and Lynch, 2006) have used the term ‘ethnoregionalist’ in their writings, which has been endorsed by a number of other scholars (Newman, 1996; Mueller-Rommell, 1998; Tronconi, 2004; Miodownik and Cartrite, 2006; Gómez-Reino, 2008). This label was intended to capture the territorial dimension as well as the cultural/linguistic aspect of party goals (De Winter and Türsan, 1998: 7). However, whilst this term was positively employed to overcome some of the terminological divides in the field, it also has some limitations. First of all, not all parties have mobilised issues of culture or language in their territorial strategies, such as the Scottish National Party. Rather than being exclusively focussed on cultural or identity goals (relating to the ‘ethnie’, i.e. see Smith, 1990), many SNRPs mobilise on political or economic territorial interests. Secondly, few of these parties would accept an ‘ethnic’ label as they seek to portray themselves as open to multiculturalism and diversity (Hepburn, 2009a). De Winter et al (2006) have recently proposed ‘autonomist parties’ as a more generic and objective label, an effort that is to be welcomed. By focusing on the autonomy goals of parties, the term avoids the normative connotations of ‘ethnic’. Yet a small snag here is that many autonomy-supporting regional branches of statewide parties, such as the Quebec Liberal Party or the Scottish Labour Party, could also be described as autonomist (Sorens, 2008), which potentially stretches the concept too far.

The quest for an agreed label is still beyond the shared capacity of territorial politics scholars. However, this need not prevent the further comparative and theoretical development of the field. In this volume, we have used the terminology of both nationalist and regionalist parties in the footsteps of Keating and Loughlin (1997) and Pallarès, Montero and Llera (1997). ‘Nationalist’ and ‘regionalist’ are arguably the most popular labels for this party family. They may be distinguished from one another based on political discourse and self-determination goals. To illustrate, nationalist parties are often understood as independence-seeking parties that base their claims to nationhood on historical, cultural and linguistic factors (Breuilly, 1990), whilst regionalist parties tend to be seen as having more functional demands for greater powers and recognition of territorial particularities *within* the state (Pallarès et al 1997). For instance, Connor (1977)

argues that regionalism and nationalism cannot be conflated, as the former seeks autonomy within the existing state, whereas the latter seeks separation from it. However, Keating (1996: 4) contends that ‘the division between nationalism and regionalism here is by no means clear, and is becoming less so as the state reconfigures’. Lynch (1996) agrees, demonstrating how regionalist parties have used nationalist arguments in their response to European integration, whilst nationalist parties have become more pragmatic in their definitions of (shared) sovereignty. Applegate (1990: 1165) also concurs with this blurring of previous distinctions, arguing that ‘the study of regionalism...intersects with the study of nationalism in a rather ambiguous way. Regionalism seems to be like nationalism, but without the much-disliked features of ethnic prejudice and secessionism. Of course, these distinctions often collapse when actual examples are looked at’.

In this collection, we seek to look at actual examples, by analysing both stateless nationalist and regionalist parties as part of the same party family. Although some contributions emphasise the more regionalist orientation of parties, whilst other highlight their self-perception as nationalists (in line with the distinctions posed above), we do agree that these parties exhibit a shared commitment to *substate territorial empowerment*, which distinguishes them from other party families. This ‘core business’ has encouraged us to examine and compare these parties across cases, to identify common traits and responses to the twin challenges of multi-level, multi-dimensional politics. As such, SNRPs may be defined as political parties whose core business is substate territorial empowerment, whereby empowerment involves seeking to represent and advance the particular interests of the stateless territory – be it referred to as a region, nation, people or *Heimat* – and where territorial interests may be economic, political, social, cultural or symbolic in nature (see below for further analysis of ‘territorial interests’).

A first rationale for employing this double-category and not that of, for example, ‘ethno-regionalist’ is that we wish to stress the *territorial* aspect of the parties. In particular, we do not believe that all nationalist and regionalist parties have a core ‘ethnic’ feature, or mobilise exclusively on culture and language (although some do). Many parties compete largely on economic territorial demands (such as the *Partito Sardo d’Azione* or the PDS in East Germany), whilst others have strongly resisted cultural labels (such as the SNP). A second motivation for adopting the language of nationalist and

regionalist parties is to take into account party self-definitions, whereby some parties describe themselves as regionalist (e.g. *Partido Regionalista de Cantabria*) and others are nationalist (e.g. *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*). It is also useful to consider the way in which the parties use different terminology in different contexts to advance their goals – for instance Scottish politicians tend to call Scotland a nation when competing in the UK political arena, and a region when they operate in Brussels (Hepburn, 2006). Of course, we also acknowledge that some parties choose not to use either the word regionalist or nationalist in their names, as is evident in Massetti's (2009b) inventory of parties. Yet even these parties, such as *Union Valdôtaine* or *Convergència i Unió*, tend to use the discourse of regionalism or nationalism in their party programmes (Lynch, 1996). So although the category is still far from ideal, the terminology of nationalist and regionalist parties allows us to include the widest spectrum of substate parties demanding territorial empowerment, and to focus on various aspects of the territorial claims of parties.

As well as seeking an agreed name for these actors, scholars have encountered problems in defining what they want. For instance, Sharpe (1993: 6) argues that 'the majority of regional nationalist movements do not seek separation but, rather, some institutional and symbolic recognition of their sense of difference from the core culture'; Türsan (1998) calls them 'ethnic entrepreneurs' which seek the political reorganization of the state based on their claims for ethnic distinctiveness; whilst Müller-Rommel (1998) sees them as 'geographically concentrated peripheral minorities which challenge the working order and sometimes the democratic order of a nation-state by demanding recognition of their cultural identity'. In these and many other definitions of nationalist and regionalist parties, there is a strong emphasis on the cultural/ethnic demands of parties. Culture is certainly an important component of many party demands, and claims may include the recognition and maintenance regional or minority language, the teaching of local history in schools, and control over regional media. However, as argued previously, cultural recognition and protection is not the only goal of nationalist and regionalist parties. There are other political, social and economic considerations to take into account. As Rokkan and Urwin (1983) effectively demonstrated, periphery mobilisation draws on a range of territorial, cultural and economic resources, and whilst

culture, identity and ‘ethnicity’ often received the greatest attention from party scholars, economic and territorial goals are equally, if not more, important to some parties.

Many scholars concur with De Winter and Türsan’s (1998) assertion that the defining characteristic and ‘core business’ of nationalist and regionalist parties is an essentially ‘territorial’ goal: the demand for self-government based on territorial identities and interests (Gómez-Reino, 2008). Here, it is important to note that self-government does not necessarily equate to independence, as theorists of nationalism often misconstrue (Breuilly, 1990). Instead, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties have interpreted the principle of self-determination to mean different degrees of autonomy. This can be seen as a pragmatic response to the political spaces created by changing state and supranational opportunity structures. This was first recognised by Rokkan and Urwin, who posited that there were seven paths toward autonomy, including peripheral protest, regional autonomy, federalism, confederalism and secession (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983: 141). In 1998, De Winter (1998) proposed an alternative classification scheme, which included protectionist, autonomist, federalist and independentist demands. These analyses highlight the important fact that many parties do not want to break up the state, but to seek accommodation of territorial interests and identities within it. Arguably, this places them on a par with many regional branches of statewide parties, such as the Catalan Socialist Party or the Quebec Liberal Party (QLP), which have sought greater autonomy for the region (Sorens, 2008; Hepburn, 2010). Moreover, there is large variation in the type of self-determination that parties seek, reinforcing the heterogeneity of this party family. Indeed, De Winter (1998) argues that it is impossible to locate parties on a fixed, permanent point on the territorial dimension, as they will often alter their territorial demands in accordance with tactical considerations. This underlines the need to understand stateless nationalist and regionalist parties as strategic actors that seek to maximise their political influence and electoral potential.

However, nationalism and regionalism is not only concerned with constitutional change and greater self-government. There are other sources of territorial mobilisation. For instance, forms of territorial empowerment may range from the establishment of trade missions or diplomatic agreements abroad to obtaining enhanced representation and participation of the region in state institutions. Importantly, the latter may even involve

trading off constitutional autonomy for more regional power at the centre (Hepburn, 2010). Yet the area that has perhaps been most neglected by regionalist party scholars is the economic dimension of territorial demands. Generally speaking, economic territorial interests relate to the (socio-)economic position of the substate territory vis-à-vis the rest of the state. In the 1970s, scholars argued that territorial strategies were intended to alleviate the economic deprivation that been created by uneven capitalist development (Nairn, 1977). Hechter and Levi (1979) also argued that nationalist goals were developed to address regional economic inequalities and an imposed cultural division of labour, whereby cultural distinctions were super-imposed on class lines. But this analysis cannot explain why territorial economic strategies have also been pursued by parties in wealthier regions – i.e. ‘the revolt of the rich’ – as well as poorer ones. This requires a more comprehensive understanding of the political salience of regional economic disparities.

Broadly speaking, for those regions whose socio-economic status is superior to the rest of the country, and who may contribute more to state revenues than they receive in public expenditure, territorial economic aims may be to reduce their contributions to the centre. Contrarily, regions whose socio-economic status is below the state average may seek protectionism and increased resources from the centre to improve economic performance. This may involve reducing the (economic) competences of the regional government (i.e. decreasing self-government) in exchange for obtaining greater wealth and patronage from the state. In a certain sense, this may also be understood as a form of territorial empowerment, by prioritising the socio-economic welfare of a regional population over constitutional powers. However, economic goals are not only a matter of the territorial distribution of wealth in states. It may also include a greater say over the type of economic development pursued, whether that is more in line with local traditions or norms of development. Finally, economic goals may be to increase regional competitiveness not only within the state, but also with other regions in Europe or internationally, with the creation of the concomitant institutional structures, fiscal policies and tax powers to do so. Taking all of these territorial interests into account, we can therefore surmise that contemporary nationalism and regionalism is characterised by a complex mix of political, cultural and economic markers, which are mobilised differently according to the changing constellations of power at state and supranational levels.

From niche to ‘normal’ politics

Because of their overriding emphasis on the demand for self-government, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties have been included in the category of ‘niche parties’, alongside green and radical-right parties (Jensen and Spoon, 2008). The ‘niche’ aspect, according to Meguid (2005: 347-8), implies (1) a rejection of the class-based orientation of politics; (2) a reliance on ‘novel’ issues that do not coincide with existing lines of political division; (3) and the adoption of policies on only a limited set of issues. However, the inclusion of this party family in the ‘niche’ category is problematic for a number of reasons. On the first dimension, SNRPs have not always rejected the left-right dimension – rather, many portray themselves as centre-right or centre-left parties, such as the Catalan Convergence and Union Party (a Christian Democratic regionalist party), and the Scottish National Party (a Social Democratic nationalist party). As Gómez-Reino (2006: 263) argues, ‘regionalist parties are not single-issue parties, but generally are organisations which conform to certain ideological positions and policy preferences’. The constitutional/territorial and socioeconomic/class-based demands of a given party are not mutually exclusive. Rather, parties adopt positions on both dimensions, and demands for territorial autonomy cut across the left-right dimension in numerous ways.

Regarding the second characteristic of ‘niche-ness’, it is increasingly difficult to argue that territory is a ‘novel’ issue in multi-level systems. In a landmark study, Marks et al (2008) created an index that accounted for the main characteristics of regional authorities from 1950 to 2006, which demonstrated a steady increase in regionalisation across OECD countries. Of the 42 countries they examined, half of them had created regional tiers during the period and no country had become more centralised. This is an astonishing finding, and poses important questions for the declining functions of states. It also appears that this trend is particularly marked in Europe, where all of the large West European states – such as the Germany, France, the UK, Spain, Austria and Italy, and some of its smaller ones, like Belgium and Switzerland – have created or strengthened regional tiers of authority (Swenden, 2006). As states in Europe have been decentralising, this has created or strengthened regional electoral arenas and forced statewide and regionalist parties to address substantive regional policy issues.

Although most approaches to party competition emphasise ideology and interests as the critical axis upon which parties compete, in regional arenas in which the constitutional question is highly contested, parties of all creeds have been forced to take a position on how they want their territory to co-exist with the state. A wealth of studies have pointed to the increasing importance of the territorial dimension of party competition (Deschouwer, 2003; Hopkin, 2003; Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Hepburn, 2010). In substate territories such as Quebec or the Basque Country, it has become clear that competition over the representation of territorial interests has become the primary cleavage in the regional party system. With the rise in electoral strength of autonomy-seeking SNRPs, regional branches of statewide parties have adopted stronger constitutional claims (such as devolution for Scottish Labour, or recognition of a distinct society for the PLQ). Detterbeck and Hepburn (2009) argue that statewide parties have adopted three strategies in response to multi-level governance: traditionalist, federalist and autonomist. Territory is no longer a 'novel' issue in the party politics of multi-level states (if, indeed, this has ever been the case).

Meguid's (2005: 348) third characteristic of a niche party is that it competes on a limited set of issues and eschews comprehensive policy platforms. As the above analysis indicates, this trait is not typical of nationalist and regionalist parties. Many of these parties have positioned themselves on the left-right dimension, and have developed comprehensive socio-economic policy programmes in order to compete with mainstream parties. For example, the SNP has a strong social justice agenda, the *Parti Québécois* has extensive plans for economic development, and the Catalan CiU has developed a robust policy portfolio after two decades in government. There have even been attempts by several nationalist and regionalist parties at becoming 'catch-all' parties representing all classes and sectors in society (Gómez-Reino, 2008). Such parties have become ideologically flexible, which is an advantage in an age of post-ideological politics. In particular, it has been shown that parties that take up a moderate position on the left-right dimension, and moderate autonomy goals, are more electorally successful than parties that are situated at the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum (Gómez-Reino et al, 2006: 250). These parties' extensive policy programmes, growing outreach into diverse social strata, and ideological adaptability, indicates that they have become 'normalised'.

Finally, a growing body of research has documented the European programmes of nationalist and regionalist parties, including their involvement in the ‘European Free Alliance—Democratic Party of the Peoples (Lynch, 1996). European integration has had a specific dynamic in reinforcing regional interests and identities and providing a new context for autonomy claims (Lynch, 1996; De Winter and Gómez-Reino, 2002; Jolly, 2007; Elias, 2008; Hepburn, 2010). The altered claims of these parties, including a more pro-European discourse, acceptance of the single market, and a commitment to equality and diversity, demonstrates that these parties have become in a sense ‘Europeanised’ or ‘internationalised’ (Lynch, 1996; Elias, 2008). It is no longer accurate to describe these parties as ‘provincial’ and ‘particularist’ actors only focussed on local issues.

Challenges of Multi-level Politics

The transformation of nationalist and regionalist parties from ‘peripheral actors’ to mainstream political players with comprehensive policy programmes operating on multiple territorial levels has not come without its difficulties, however. The first ‘challenge’ for stateless nationalists and regionalists has come about as a result of state structural change, whereby some powers have been devolved to newly created regional parliaments (Hough and Jeffery, 2006), whilst others have been transferred upwards to Europe (Keating, 1998; Hepburn, 2008). There are a number of ways in which scholars have sought to explain the emergence of a new political order in Europe, and to conceptualise the structures, processes, institutional behaviour and changing role of non-state actors resulting from integration. Of particular note is the concept of multi-level governance (MLG), which was introduced by Gary Marks (1992) in an analysis of how the reform of the EU structural funds in 1988 created opportunities for regions to engage in EU policy-making and implementation. MLG was defined as ‘a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers’ (Marks, 1993: 392). The MLG approach emphasised the flexible nature of the EU system in which multiple actors play an influential role in decision-making at multiple levels. In particular, it stressed that the state and supranational levels were not the only relevant levels of political mobilisation, but the substate regional level was important too. As Piattoni (2009: 172) points out, the levels of MLG must be understood as both *territorial levels*

(each with a degree of authority over its inhabitants) and *jurisdictional* levels (comprising specific functions). Political actors – including parties – are required to engage at all three levels to address functional and territorial issues that emerge in relation to that sphere. As such, the multi-level system that emerges from decentralisation, supranational integration and the empowerment of non-state actors, has seen the creation of regional electoral arenas that have become a new focal point for territorial and functional interests, as well as opportunities for political action at the European level. In short, SNRPs are no longer constrained to ‘state opposition’ (Breuilly 1990): they must also develop strategies to engage in politics at the regional and supranational levels.

First, with regard to the new territorial distribution of power within states, decentralisation has altered relations between the state and its constituent parts, opening up new spaces for SNRPs to pursue their demands. This has drastically altered the nature of intergovernmental relations (IGR) – both between the state and the region, and between the regions themselves. On the first matter, the election of SNRPs to regional government has resulted in more conflicting and formalised relations with the state (e.g. on Scotland in the UK, see Cairney, 2009; Wright, 2009). SNRPs have the opportunity to act as ‘official’ defender of regional interests, but they are also required to cooperate with state institutions on certain matters (for instance, national security), which might lead to them being perceived as part of the establishment. This may have an impact on their support base, in particular, putting off grass-roots voters who seek independence and non-cooperation with the state (on the *Lega Nord*, see Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). On the second issue, SNRPs in regional government must seek new alliances to influence the decisions of the state. For example it is interesting to note that the SNP government in Edinburgh quickly joined forces with other nationalist administrations in Northern Ireland and Wales to lobby for more formalised intergovernmental relations, thus putting a ‘Celtic periphery’ pressure on London (McGarvey and Cairney, 2008). In Spain, new constellations of power have arisen as a result of various pacts between SNRPs in Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country to pressure the Spanish state, through coordinated action, to grant their demands for self-determination (Galeuscat, 2006). In a multi-level system, the state level constitutes another arena that SNRPs can ‘play’ to their best advantage. In cases where SNRPs have entered government at the state level, this

has opened a new series of opportunities and challenges for political action. For instance, in Italy the *Lega Nord* was responsible for bringing down the first Berlusconi government in 1994, as well as introducing several statewide reforms in the second administration (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2002). At the same time, as an SNRP opposing the Italian state, the Lega Nord has also been forced to alter and moderate its position (away from secession) as it became part of this very system (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005)

At the regional substate level, parties also face new possibilities for realizing their goals. For instance, decentralisation of state structures has created or strengthened regional electoral arenas, which have benefited nationalist and regionalist parties by giving them a new platform for their demands. This all means that nationalism and regionalism is no longer only about seeking control of the state, but rather preparing itself for office at the substate level. Indeed, cross-national evidence demonstrates that nationalist parties perform better in regional than statewide elections (Gómez-Reino et al, 2006). Regional elections are ‘first-order’ elections for SNRPs (Gómez-Reino et al, 2006: 256). Also, being in government at the regional level offers opportunities as symbolic defenders of the interests and identity of their territory (Gómez-Reino 2006: 259). Yet being in government at the regional level also poses problems for SNRPs, including the risk of losing their credibility (especially if they are independence-supporting parties whose aim is to break up the state, not become part of it), and the need to moderate their autonomy and other policy goals (especially if they are part of a coalition).

Finally, at the level above the state level, European integration offers parties new opportunities to pursue their political projects. SNRPs have begun a new search for forms of autonomy within contemporary Europe that amount to something less than secession. These include a place within a Europe of the Regions, a Europe of the Peoples, a Federal Europe, or a Europe of Small Nations (Lynch, 1996; Keating, 2006; Elias, 2008; Hepburn, 2010). However, there are also constraints posed by supranational integration. In particular, much EU legislation directly affects the competences of regional governments, and there is evidence of moves to a more critical attitude towards Europe amongst nationalist and regionalist parties as they become more aware of European ‘encroachment’ on regional competences, and the limits of Europe for pursuing autonomy goals (Hepburn, 2008). For instance, the Bavarian CSU is critical of EU

competition policy for undermining its capacity to subsidise public services, whilst the SNP has demanded that the European common fisheries policy be reformed to safeguard this traditional Scottish industry. In short, decentralisation and supranational integration have warranted new responses from parties that had previously concentrated on local and state electoral competition. SNRPs parties now operate in a complex multi-level system in which they must develop differentiated policies and strategies for the regional, statewide and European levels.

Challenges of Multi-dimensional Party Competition

The second challenge for SNRPs is a much older issue that has, nevertheless, been transformed by state structural change. This is the need to expand the party's policy portfolio beyond issues exclusively relating to nationalism or regionalism, in order to compete on other ideological dimensions in a multi-dimensional policy space. Most approaches to party competition tend to emphasise left-right ideology and interests as the critical axis upon which parties compete. In particular, Downs' (1957) 'proximity theory' of party competition remains highly influential. Downs argued that parties compete by taking diverging positions along a set of issue dimensions in a unidimensional policy space, whereby they will 'strive to distinguish themselves ideologically from each other' in order to win elections and enter office (Downs, 1957: 126-7). Sartori (1976) concurred, understanding party competition as based on the existence of 'left-right polarisation'. Yet Sartori himself was aware of the bias inherent in the left-right imagery, and the fact that other dimensions and identifications were important. In later work, he considered religious, ethnic and linguistic dimensions in determining party competition (Sani and Sartori, 1983). In this analysis, parties have multiple preferences and policy issues that they wish to maximise in the game of party competition. Other scholars have also argued that issues relating to gender, race, sexual orientation and ecology have increasingly gained importance in party systems, forcing parties to compete on these multiple dimensions (Inglehart, 1977; Albright, 2009). The development of a multidimensional policy space has forced parties to articulate different preferences on a number of issues, thereby expanding their policy portfolios to compete on several fronts.

How have SNRPs responded to the development of a multi-dimensional policy space? In their early years, many parties sought to develop what Budge and Fairlie (1983) would call 'ownership' of the singular issue of territory. In other words, parties sought to make their concerns regarding self-determination most prominent in campaigns, and would seek to attract those voters who were concerned with this issue. However, a problem here is that some issues are not associated with a particular ideology. Territory is one such issue, whereby constitutional change or the defence of territorial interests may be pursued by any or all of the main 'class-based' parties, as well as regionalist and green parties. Thus, SNRPs have been forced to compete with statewide parties on the centre-periphery/territorial cleavage. Yet they have also been forced to compete on other issues in order to increase their share of the vote and to appeal to voters who are not solely concerned with the issue of self-determination. This has not always been an easy, or straightforward, thing to do.

Positioning on left-right ideology has long been the Achilles heel of nationalist and regionalist parties. In uniting the nation or region under the banner of self-determination, SNRPs parties must make class-based ideology a secondary consideration. Yet because sections of these parties often have different sets of ideological beliefs, which are difficult to accommodate in the party, this often results in divisions and splits. Furthermore, left-right ideology is the traditional cleavage upon which statewide parties compete (whilst SNRPs have primarily focussed on the centre-periphery cleavage), and if the latter do not locate themselves on the left-right spectrum this arguably reduces their visibility and coalition potential.

In his seminal essay, Michael Freeden (1998) defined ideology as a flexible and coherent set of ideas and values that can provide a comprehensive range of answers to the political questions that societies generate. Freeden argued that nationalism constitutes a 'thin' ideology, as it focused on a narrow theme of nation, and was therefore not a strong enough foundation for a political party seeking office. Instead, it was necessary for nationalist parties to supplement their core aim of national self-determination with other 'idea-systems' that allowed them to articulate broad positions on 'social justice, distribution of resources, and conflict management which mainstream ideologies address' (Freeden, 1998: 751). Despite this analysis, the (left-right) ideological profiles of SNRPs

have received little scholarly attention. This may be because the policy positions of these parties are so heterogeneous that attempts to categorise them are plagued by difficulties (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; De Winter et al, 2006; Gómez-Reino, 2008). Some scholars have argued that ‘ethnoregionalist’ parties are the only party family in Europe that is located across the entire left-right dimension (Tronconi, 2004; Gómez-Reino, 2008). Such parties range from radical left (Scottish Socialist Party), to centre-left (*Eusko Alkartasuna*), to centre-right (*Convergència i Unió*) to radical right (*Vlaams Belang*). Although some scholars have argued that there is a tendency towards centre-left positions amongst nationalist and regionalist parties, Massetti’s (2009b) analysis reveals that there is a more-or-less equal distribution of parties across the left-right ideological spectrum. Parties themselves are coalitions of interests and subject to internal contestation over demands, sometimes leading to splits, such as the dissolution of the *Volksunie* into a left-liberal party (SPIRIT), and a Christian Democratic party (*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*) in 2001. SNRPs have been known to move backward and forwards along ideological spectrum, as Hepburn’s (2009b) analysis of the Sardinian Action Party makes clear. Others, however, have moved to a post-ideological position whereby ‘pragmatic’ politics is the key order of the day (Lynch, 2009). As such, it is impossible to generalise on the association of nationalism or regionalism with a particular class-based ideology.

Yet these parties have not restricted themselves to competing only on the territorial and class dimensions of parties. In response to the multidimensional policy space in which they now operate, and the move towards ‘post-ideological politics’, many SNRPs, such as *Sardignia Natzione* and *Plaid Cymru*, have made environmental matters a key concern in their policy platforms and linked it to the self-determination of the territory, leading to the creation of a new term ‘econationalist party’ (Hepburn, 2009b; Elias, 2009). Other parties have developed strong policy programmes on devolved immigration, often seeking to expand the ranks of the region by welcoming new members (Hepburn, 2009a). SNRPs have therefore been forced to develop positions on a variety of issues outwith the class divide.

A third challenge for SNRPs, which results from the development of a multidimensional policy space within multiple political arenas, is the creation of a new political rival, in the form of regional branches of statewide parties. In recent years,

formerly centralised statewide parties have granted their regional units varying degrees of autonomy. These branches are now able to position themselves on regional issues, and incorporate territorial interests into their programmes in order to compete with SNRPs. This means that stateless nationalist and regionalist parties are no longer the only 'kids on the bloc' seeking to represent territorial interests. Statewide parties must alter their programmes and organisational structures in response to decentralisation (Fabre, 2008). They have developed a range of responses to the asymmetrical nature of party competition resulting from multi-level governance, including centralist, federalist and autonomist strategies (Detterbeck and Hepburn, 2009). Because SNRPs like the SNP, PQ and CSU have become relevant players in regional party systems, these parties have altered the patterns of party competition by politicising and mobilizing territorial interests, in particular, claims to greater autonomy. In many cases, this means that the territorial demands of the newly decentralised regional branch of the statewide party have become similar to that of their regionalist party rivals. For instance in Belgium, the success of the statewide parties in adopting the constitutional positions of the nationalist parties in Walloon and Flanders has rendered the latter politically irrelevant and led to their demise (Deschouwer, 2009).

Re-conceptualising nationalist and regionalist mobilisation

As noted in the above discussion, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties must now adapt and respond to several loci of decision-making at different territorial levels, and to develop policy platforms on a wide range of issues beyond the core goal of self-determination. The aim of this collection is to firstly, to identify some common issues in the responses of these parties to multilevel, multidimensional politics and secondly, to reassess territorial mobilisation in the face of these twin challenges. Importantly, this may involve re-conceptualising what SNRPs are fighting for (i.e. where self-determination is no longer the only issue), what their priorities are (i.e. where the desire for power may override party policies and principles), what their role is in party systems (i.e. in some cases moving from 'outsider' to 'insider' status and the benefits and difficulties this entails), and how they have adapted to the multi-level political game. These issues have been so far been under-researched in the field of territorial politics.

The first theme of the volume is how SNRPs position themselves on various dimensions of party competition. Many scholars have focussed almost exclusively the self-determination goals of these parties: but here we have sought to understand how their policy positions (including class, the environment and Europe) have informed their territorial goals and vice versa. Moreover, we are interested in issues associated with their adaptation to party systems characterised by either ideological convergence or ideological polarisation, and the threat of being squeezed out of either system. Can nationalism or regionalism present a ‘third-way’ to class-based ideological party competition? The second theme of this volume is the ways in which nationalist and regionalist parties have adapted to decentralisation and European integration, and the challenges of operating in multi-level political arenas. For instance, as decentralisation has gone some way to satisfy demands for constitutional and symbolic recognition of the region, has this undermined goals for independence? Or contrarily, have problems associated with regional and European politics strengthened these goals? The contributors to this collection explore the challenges involved in the move from ‘protest to power’ and the dilemmas of government participation in multi-level states, in particular problems of coalition-building whereby parties find themselves accommodating to the system. Furthermore, we will explore how regionalist parties have adapted to the new reality of not being the only party advancing territorial goals, in their competition with decentralised statewide parties.

Although this volume explicitly does not explore the self-determination goals of regionalist parties, which has already received extensive coverage by scholars (especially by De Winter and his colleagues), we kept coming back to question of what ‘territorial interests’ meant. And in our analysis, we found that territorial interests did not only have to do with self-determination, ‘nationhood’ and identity. Rather, there are other sources of territorial mobilisation, and the pursuit of territorial interests may involve addressing regional economic disparities, seeking economic concessions, or gaining greater interest representation in the institutions of the state. This broad definition of ‘territorial interests’ has enabled us to include parties that place the interests of the territory at the heart of their political discourse but who do not necessarily seek independence, in our analysis – such as the PDS in East Germany or the CSU in Bavaria.

The volume is structured as follows. Emanuele Massetti (2009b) begins by developing an analytical framework for the analysis of regionalist party positioning on three main dimensions of party competition: class, territory and Europe. Evidence has so far suggested that regionalist parties span the entire left-right, centre-periphery (i.e. protectionist—indeendentist) and European (pro—anti European integration) spectrums. Drawing on a large number of case studies, including the parties focused on elsewhere in this volume, Massetti seeks to account for why there is such diversity in the regionalist party family. He applies a rational choice approach to the analysis, understanding party ideology and positioning as a function of the conditions of electoral demand and supply. In the analysis, Massetti explores the significance of a range of factors in explaining variation amongst parties over time – including socio-structural factors (such as geography, history, economy and culture) and political factors (including multi-level political change, electoral systems and party systems). The contribution reveals that the dynamics of party competition, combined with the socio-economic and socio-cultural identities of regions, are major factors in explaining why regionalist parties adopt certain positions on the class, territorial and European dimensions.

The subsequent contributions focus on single or comparative case studies of nationalist and regionalist parties in Western Europe. Anwen Elias (2009) places minority nationalist mobilisation in a comparative perspective, by exploring the move from ‘marginality to opposition to government’ of Plaid Cymru—Party of Wales and the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG). By doing so, it identifies a number of common challenges and patterns of adaptation of nationalist parties to multi-dimensional, multi-level politics. Elias rejects the categorisation of nationalist and regionalist parties as ‘niche’ actors, and instead explores how PC and the BNG mobilise on a broad set of socioeconomic and ‘new politics’ issues. In particular, she highlights the importance of post-materialist issues in their party platforms, whereby the ‘econationalism’ of Plaid rejects both ethnic and class-based interpretations of the nation in favour of an environmental perspective. Elias furthermore explores the dynamics of party adaptation from protest to power, the idea of nationalism as an alternative or ‘third way’ to left-right politics, and the effects of decentralisation and European integration on nationalist parties. She successfully identifies a common pattern of ideological adaptation by Plaid

Cymru and the BNG, whereby both parties have found it necessary to moderate their ideological and territorial towards the ‘centre ground’ in order to achieve electoral success.

Kris Deschouwer’s (2009) contribution on Belgium regionalist parties provides an effective warning to parties elsewhere whose territorial goals have been endorsed by statewide parties. By charting the ‘rise and fall’ of these parties, Deschouwer demonstrates that regionalist parties in Belgium were so successful in putting pressure on statewide parties to support a greater degree of self-determination for the Flanders, Walloon and Brussels, that the latter adopted their positions and proceeded to reform state structures along federal lines. On the upside, this satisfied the regionalist parties’ demands. But on the downside, the creation of a federal state also rendered regionalist parties politically obsolete. In other words, regionalist parties in Belgium became victims of their own success. Since then, electoral decline has forced these parties into coalitions with statewide parties, and Deschouwer draws out the significant effects that being in coalition government has on the regionalist parties’ strategies and support base. This contribution offers a great deal of insight into other cases of territorial mobilisation, and also poses an interesting question: will regionalist parties elsewhere – in the UK, Spain, Italy and beyond – suffer the same fate of their Belgian counterparts, if statewide parties continue to adopt their territorial demands? Moreover, if regional branches obtain more autonomy from statewide parties, and adopt stronger autonomy goals, what is left to distinguish regionalists from regional branches?

The next contribution on the PDS/Left Party in Germany, by Dan Hough and Michael Koß (2009), marks an interesting contrast to what has happened in Belgium. Whereas Deschouwer demonstrates how the positions of the regionalist parties in Belgium were taken over by the statewide parties, the eastern regionalist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) did the opposite, by seeking to emulate the statewide parties in Germany by amalgamating with another party to extend its electoral reach into the West. This contribution challenges a number of assumptions about territorial politics being exclusively about issues of nationhood and constitutional self-determination. Instead, Hough and Koß reveal that territorial mobilisation has a much to do with economic interests and seeking a ‘better deal’ for the region, rather than exclusively

demanding a reconfiguration of state institutions. The authors also highlight the challenges that a multi-level policy such as the Federal Republic of Germany presents for a regionalist party seeking to extend its political and organisational base. The regionalist PDS has been forced to downplay Eastern German interests, moderate its left-leaning ideological position, and loosen its horizontal and vertical organisational linkages as a result of its transformation into the Left Party. However, as the authors rightly note, the Left Party looks unlikely to lose its Eastern support base despite the expansion. This makes the Left Party more akin to the regionalised federal parties of Canada, some of which developed around the interests of particular provinces, such as the western (Alberta)-dominated Canadian Alliance party.

Moving on from regionalist parties that have grown in electoral success, Eve Hepburn (2009) explores the left-right ideological trajectory of a party that has gradually weakened over the years. Whilst the Sardinian Party of Action (Psd'Az) was once the largest party in Sardinia, it rarely commands more than 5% of the vote in recent elections. She poses the question: what explains the failure of regionalist parties? In particular, is ideological vagueness, or flexibility, the main factor? This contribution examines how the Psd'Az moved from the left to the right of the political spectrum throughout its history, suffering splits and divisions until it sought to portray itself as 'beyond' class politics in the early 2000s – a strategy that failed to work in the increasingly polarised context of the Italian political system. Whilst ideological flexibility is often seen as a strength for mainstream parties in today's post-ideological era, for the Psd'Az the various coalitions made with both left-wing and right-wing parties undermined the credibility of the party. Hepburn also identifies several other factors that have led to the decline and failure of the Psd'Az, including the party's failure to compete successfully with nationalist competitors and regional branches of statewide parties, its inability to manoeuvre in an increasingly bipolarised system, and its limited adaptation to multi-level politics. In particular, she considers how the Psd'Az sought to use the European level as a 'lifeline' for increasing its visibility and realizing its goals for Sardinian autonomy in a federal European setting.

Peter Lynch's (2009) contribution on the ideological evolution of the Scottish National Party offers a marked contrast to the history of the Psd'Az. Rather than swinging from one side of the left-right spectrum to the other, the SNP's ideological

positioning as a left-of-centre party has been fairly consistent. That is, until recently when the SNP moved to a post-ideological form of ‘pragmatic politics’ in order to compete with New Labour – the party’s main competitor in Scotland. The discussion raises important questions about how nationalist and regionalist parties respond to party systems characterised by increasing ideological convergence, as is the case of Scotland and the United Kingdom more generally. It also underlines the fact that ideology is a secondary consideration to the goal of self-determination, which is ‘independence in Europe’ for the SNP. Yet at the same time, ideology is also important in mediating the pursuit of this goal in terms of the SNP’s competition on left-of-centre politics in Scotland, and its response to contextual factors of party system change and participation in multi-level politics. Since 2007 the SNP has formed a minority government at the regional level, which has affected its positioning on the left-right dimension. The SNP has adopted a range of policy positions along the left-right spectrum in order to become a ‘catch-all’ party in the devolved Scottish party system. This analysis corresponds with Elias’ identification of a pattern of ideological moderation in Plaid Cymru and BNG strategies whilst in government.

The concluding contribution by Charlie Jeffery (2009) reviews the main dilemmas facing stateless nationalist and regionalist parties in the changing context of multi-level, multi-dimensional party competition, based upon the findings presented throughout this volume. Building upon these findings, he sets out several new research agendas on regional party competition. These include the influence of institutions, the declining attractiveness of Europe as an opportunity structure for regionalist parties, the effects of regional government participation, and the challenges of competition with regional branches of statewide parties. However, there are still some obstacles to pursuing these lines of questioning. Jeffery notes that the field is still plagued by a ‘continental divide’, whereby North American and European scholarship diverges in its fundamental approach to (regional) party competition. Furthermore, Jeffery finds that the mainstream study of party politics and competition is still overwhelmingly focused on the state level, despite the evidence presented in this volume to the contrary. There is still much work to be done to make territorial politics a mainstream discipline of political science, and this collection aims to make a significant contribution to hastening this shift.

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